



CCNL Prayer Prompt January 2021 dream again

In 2020, we all could certainly affirm that it was not what any of us envisioned or dreamed about in any way - nor one we probably want to ever repeat again! As we begin this new year, God invites us, as His much-loved children, to pray - to talk with Him, to ask in His name, to listen for His promptings, to act as His hands and feet, to imagine new horizons and to dream with Him for a better world.

At times, we may speak of those who are "dreamers" as not being very practical or wise. A friend's Irish mother used to say somewhat disparagingly: "Aye, he's such a dreamer that he thinks all his geese are swans!" Yet we NEED to dream - God created us with such amazing creative minds and spirits to discover new ways to resolve small and big challenges, to see potential beyond what is to what could be in people, and to tackle even the most daunting of problems with courage and passion. Let's be grateful for dreamers.

This January, the scope of our dreams sometimes seem more limited to daily things that we easily took for granted last January. We dream of once again having meals or celebrations with family and friends - birthdays, anniversaries, weddings, and even funerals. We dream of times ahead when we may not need to wear masks or stay two meters apart. We dream of warmly welcoming strangers, worshipping together singing at the top of our lungs, and greeting one another with hugs and handshakes. We dream of visiting without fear, our elderly parents, or newborn babies, or those in hospital. We dream of simply talking face to face and not on a screen, laughing and crying together!

Inspiration to pray sometimes can quite frankly come from some pretty odd sources as the Spirit of God catches our attention! Recently on TV and radio, Lotto Max has been airing frequent ads that urge the listener to wonder what would they could do if they won \$40,000,000. The sales hook is always to get people to "dream bigger" than just paying off debts, buying a new car, or getting a bigger house. And dreaming bigger evidently inspires many people to action - 57% of Ontario adults on average annually buy Lotto Max tickets according to the OLG website!

Hearing a recent sermon about John the Baptist's birth, that thought of "dreaming bigger" was repeated in a much more powerful way. John was born to be a dreamer of big dreams, whose purpose in life was to "prepare the way of the Lord". He was to announce this Jesus, this "made flesh" part of the Godhead, incarnate, who was to usher in a

new Kingdom here on earth. His father, Zechariah, shared these prophetic words in Luke 1, just after John was born *"And you, my little son, will be called the prophet of the Most High, because you will prepare the way for the Lord. You will tell his people how to find salvation through forgiveness of their sins. Because of God's tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace."* Jesus' kingdom dream is an upside-down kingdom where the last shall be first; love not power will control the narrative; and all things are in process of being made right.

What if we - you and I - began to dream bigger about the Kingdom of God being at hand in 2021 - what would that dream possibly look like?

God, even though we may feel a little wearied and battered in this last year by so much loss, fear, conflict, and much change, we pray these Kingdom dreams for this coming year:

... For each of us personally, we dream God, that you will help us remember so many of the daily lessons we have been learning in the midst of this difficult year - adversity can be a diligent teacher. The value of family, the patience to wait, the joy of reading, the discovery of creativity, the gifts of friendships, the simple pleasures of walks and being outdoors, the practice of gratitude, the blessing of neighbours, the adventures in cooking, the respect and concern for others, the simpler life, our desperate need of you ...this list could be long. May we find ways to integrate these valuable lessons into how we live out this coming year and not waste them.

... For those living in poverty, we dream all may have sufficient daily food to eat; access to safer affordable places to live; greater community to care and support them; and opportunity for jobs to provide sustainable income. May ongoing local actions continue in the right direction in 2021. We pray for the City of London Homeless Prevention Team, together with the Covid WISH coalition, Ark Aid, Sanctuary London, Mission Services, Salvation Army and many others committed to looking for longer term solutions, seeking new ways of addressing these complex societal issues beyond temporary shelter. We are grateful for all in our community who offer financial and volunteer support in big and small ways to begin to accomplish this dream.

...For those living on First Nations reserves, we dream that they have equal access to education and quality healthcare; that continued reconciliation and healing from past abuses and present challenges will take place; that those without clean drinking water will finally get it; that past promises will be kept and trust will grow.

...For the many frontline and essential workers in healthcare and out in our community, we dream that great mental, physical, spiritual and emotional healing will take place in their lives where needed. They have sacrificed and risked so much in past months to care for others, God and continue to do so. Pour out your blessings on each of them to restore their spirits.

...For people of colour from all races, we dream that all will feel welcomed in London - that there will be greater effort to reduce both obvious and hidden racism in government systems, in business, in our churches and in our schools. We dream that there will be an end to racial slurs in our language, or subtle profiling in our thinking; that you will reveal to us any prejudices we may hold, and we will seek to treat each person as equally created and loved by you.

...For those who are addicted to drugs, we dream God that this year, the devastating, growing opioid crisis will be recognized and confronted here in London and around the country; that the thousands of needless deaths will stop;

that dealers and suppliers will be found out and held accountable; that the underlying causes for addictions will begin to be treated to help break the power of destruction in precious lives. May this break our hearts as it does yours.

...For those families and relationships strained to the breaking point from the stresses of this past year, we dream that families will find renewed determination to come together and seek wise counsel to help resolve conflict; that parents will find supports they need to care well for their children; that physical, sexual and emotional abuse of women, men and /or children will be revealed and necessary steps taken to stop it.

... for leaders in our city, our province, our country. They too are weary. We pray that they would seek to be ethical and trustworthy - in government, in business, in churches. Oh God, every leader is human still and will make mistakes. Most seek to make best decisions with the information and resources available at the time. Some right, some wrong. Others give in to selfish voices within them. Help us to offer grace, encouragement, prayer and healthy accountability generously to all leaders. It is not easy.

...for children growing up in this unsettled period of history, we bring them to you. Teach them God of compassionate respect for others, develop deep resiliency in them in the midst of uncertainty, and grow in them a longing for spiritual answers to life's difficult questions. May we as the adults in their lives, in various roles and relationships, model such trust in you, such integrity, such hope, that they desire to know you. Help us to demonstrate daily what it looks like to not be afraid, "to be strong and very courageous".

...for all of us as people of faith, we dream as "the church, the visible body of Christ", that we would put aside our differences, and we would love one another deeply with sincere hearts. The isolation of the pandemic has challenged us to think about who we really are as "the church". As your people, we should be a reflection of your reputation God - may we bear witness well of who you are. It must sadden you, as it does us, when according to recent studies, that the culture around us reports that when they think of Christians, the words "judgemental", "hypocritical", "self-righteous" or just "anti-everything" are the first that come to mind. You said that we should be known by our love for one another.

How winsome and awesome would that be! Shane Claiborne shared in a recent December Veritas forum at Kings College this compelling thought, that "**the Gospel spreads not by force, but by fascinating people with how we love one another.**"

Let's fascinate London with that love of Christ in us!

This new year, let's consider this prayer together, attributed to Sir Francis Drake:

"Disturb us, Lord, when we are too well pleased with ourselves, when our dreams have come true because we have dreamed too little, when we arrived safely because we sailed too close to the shore. Disturb us, Lord, when with the abundance of things we possess we have lost our thirst for the waters of life; having fallen in love with life, we have ceased to dream of eternity. And in our efforts to build a new earth, we have allowed our vision of the new Heaven to dim. Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly, to venture on wider seas where storms will show your mastery; where losing sight of land, we shall find the stars. We ask You to push back the horizons of our hopes; and to push into the future in strength, courage, hope, and love. Amen"